

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant : Wilkinson et al.
Serial No. : Not yet assigned Examiner: To be determined
Filed : October 26, 2001 Group Art Unit: To be determined
For : HYDROCARBON GAS PROCESSING
October 26, 2001

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

BY EXPRESS MAIL – Label No. EF321682501US

Commissioner for Patents and Trademarks
Washington, DC 20231

Dear Sir:

Prior to examination of the accompanying application captioned above, applicants respectfully request consideration of this application as amended as follows:

TECHNICAL AMENDMENT

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

At page 1 above the heading "BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION"
please insert the following heading and paragraph:

-- **CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

This application is a continuation application under 37 C.F.R. 1.53(b) of application Serial No. 09/677,220 filed October 2, 2000. --

REMARKS

Prior to examination of the above-captioned application, applicants respectfully request consideration of the technical amendment and remarks made herein.

Applicants have amended the specification to include a cross reference to related applications to indicate that the above-captioned application is a continuation application of parent application Serial No. 09/677,220, filed October 2, 2000. Another version of this added paragraph is not required under 37 C.F.R. 1.121(b)(iii).

1. Claims 1-13 Contain Patentable Subject Matter

Applicants acknowledge the Examiner's allowance of all pending claims 1-13 as filed in parent application Serial No. 09/677,220. Applicants have filed the accompanying continuation application in order to permit consideration of a newly cited document, U.S. Patent No. 5,755,115, which is identified along with all of the previously considered documents, in the accompanying Information Disclosure Statement.

Applicants respectfully invite the Examiner's attention to the Reasons for Allowance that accompanied the Notice of Allowability dated September 27, 2001 in the parent case. In particular, the Reasons for Allowance read, in pertinent part:

The claimed processes for the separation of a gas stream containing methane, C2 components, C3 components and heavier hydrocarbon components into a volatile residue gas fraction containing a major portion of said methane and a relatively less volatile fraction containing a major portion of said C2 components, C3 components and heavier hydrocarbon components was not found to be anticipated by or rendered obvious over the cited prior art references. *The closest prior art reference appears to be Campbell et al. (6,182,469) which also discloses a process for the recovery of ethane, ethylene, propane, propylene and heavier hydrocarbon components from a hydrocarbon gas stream. However, Campbell et al differs from the claimed processes by additionally producing a second feed stream which is then cooled under pressure, expanded to said lower pressure, and thereafter supplied to a fractionation tower at a mid-column feed point.* (Emphasis added.)

Applicants respectfully disagree with the two sentences italicized above in the Examiner's statement of Reasons for Allowance for the following reasons.

Concerning the first italicized sentence above, the Examiner's statement of Reasons for Allowance indicates that the '469 patent is the "closest prior art reference." Applicants make no admission that the U.S. Patent No. 6,182,469 to Campbell et al. ("the '469 patent) qualifies as prior art against this application. The patent issued on application no. 09/439,508 which was co-pending with the parent of the instant application at the time of filing (see page 2, line 27) and has been disclosed for comparison purposes only.

Clarification of the second italicized sentence above is respectfully sought to avoid any potential misunderstanding of the Reasons for Allowance. The Examiner noted that "Campbell et al. differs from the claimed processes by additionally producing a second feed stream which is then cooled under pressure, expanded to said lower pressure, and thereafter supplied to a fractionation tower at a mid-column feed point". Applicants point out that instant claim 2 recites a second feed stream. The claim differs from the Campbell et al. '469 patent in other claim preamble elements.

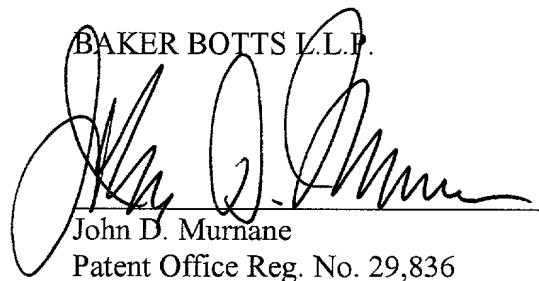
2. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing technical amendment and the remarks made herein, favorable consideration of this application is earnestly solicited.

Applicants believe no fee is required for submission to this paper.

However, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge payment of any fees required in connection with this communication to our Deposit Account No. 02-4377.

Respectfully submitted,

BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.

John D. Murnane
Patent Office Reg. No. 29,836

Anthony Giaccio
Patent Office Reg. No. 39,684

Alicia A. Russo
Patent Office Reg. No. 49,192

Attorneys for Applicants
(212) 408-2500